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PEACEKEEPING IN MALI: A MISMATCH BETWEEN A PREJUDICED MANDATE AND THE CAPACITY OF THE FORCE

by

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Abstract

By so often measuring peacekeeping missions in terms of troop strength rather than their operational and tactical capability to protect civilians, peacekeeping studies have left a void in understanding the emerging challenges facing third generation peace operations. Furthermore, these studies may lead the United Nations to deploy peacekeeping missions which lack tactical and operational capabilities, even though the mission's troop strength appears adequate based on parametric studies. Likewise, receiving a large amount of forces, the United Nations may stretch its mandate past the point of being an impartial actor. This paper argues the capacity of peacekeepers is a qualitative measure of their ability to fulfill their given mandate. The mandate of any United Nations peacekeeping force must match both the UN's peacekeeping principles as well as the capacity of the troops in the force.

This paper will briefly describe the evolution of peacekeeping missions from their beginnings in 1950 to present day. It will then explain the concept of human security and the United States Institute of Peace's framework for creating a safe and secure environment, which protects civilians in conflict. Next, it recounts the operations and tactics from December 2014 to April 2015 of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to create a safe and secure environment and also gives a sense of how these operations may change over the next two months. The paper then identifies operational and tactical challenges to MINUSMA's peacekeeping operation. These challenges demonstrate MINUSMA suffers from a lack in military capacity, which can not necessarily be remedied by increasing the number of forces within MINUSMA. Finally, the paper recommends steps for MINSUMA to match its mandate with both UN peacekeeping principles and the mission's capacity.

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Introduction

How do United Nations peacekeeping operations protect civilians in civil war? Once again, a United Nations-mandated force is being challenged to protect civilians in the midst of civil conflict, this time in Mali. Lisa Hultman has become a leading expert in the field by examining the topic from both the causes of violence against civilians and also the effectiveness of solutions. She argues peacekeeping interventions actually induce factions to target civilians for three reasons. First, factions want to establish territorial control prior to the inevitable peace settlement the invention will impose. Second, factions resort to targeting civilians when peace operations prevent them from attacking the other factions. Third, factions target civilians to reintroduce an environment of instability more suitable for their illicit economies.[1] Hultman, Kathman and Shannon argue peacekeeping missions can be successful at protecting civilians when the mission includes troops and police in large numbers because it increases the mission's capacity.[2] The 2013 study charts as independent variables the quantity of peacekeepers, police and observers and correlates the number of civilian deaths as a dependent variable. The data set covers civil wars from 1991 to 2008. In a follow-on article, Hultman et al again examine peacekeeping success in terms of capacity and composition.[3]

Hultman remarkably analyzes the effects of troop strength and organization on violence against civilians across nearly a twenty year span, yet she oversimplifies peacekeeper capacity to just a matter of troop strength.   In doing so, Hultman appears to take as an inconsequential given the capabilities peacekeepers provide in terms of their operations and tactics. Such shorthand is not limited to academics. General Romeo Dallaire, Force Commander during Rwanda's ill-fated peacekeeping mission lamented "If I had a brigade, which is 5,000, I could have done a lot."[4] By

so often measuring peacekeeping missions in terms of troop strength rather than their operational and tactical capability to protect civilians, peacekeeping studies have left a void in understanding the emerging challenges facing third generation peace operations. Furthermore, these studies may lead the United Nations to deploy peacekeeping missions which lack tactical and operational capabilities, even though the mission's troop strength appears adequate based on parametric studies. Likewise, receiving a large amount of forces, the United Nations may stretch its mandate past the point of being an impartial actor. This paper argues the capacity of peacekeepers is a qualitative measure of their ability to fulfill their given mandate. The mandate of any United Nations peacekeeping force must match both the UN's peacekeeping principles as well as the capacity of the troops in the force.

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United Nations peacekeeping operations trace their origins back to the spirit of the United Nations Charter; however, the Charter does not mention peacekeeping operations explicitly. A founding principle of the collective security organization is to combine the efforts of all peaceful states "to save successive generations from the scourge of war."[5] Indeed, one of United Nations' purposes is

> *"To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective*
> *collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and*
> *for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to*
> *bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice*
> *and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or*
> *situations which might lead to a breach of the peace."*

The UN maintains international peace and security by relying on states to find a peaceful settlement to their disputes using negotiation, mediation, and the international courts.[6] Should these options fail, the UN has granted the Security Council special powers to "recommend appropriate procedures or methods of adjustment" to resolve conflicts.[7] To deter and subsequently respond to "threats to the peace, breaches of the peace and acts of aggression,"[8] the Security Council may "take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security."[9] Early on, UN leadership realized such a binary view of conflict failed to take advantage of an opportunity to turn a short-term cessation of violence into a long-lasting peace agreement.

Lacking a strictly legal foundation, peacekeeping operations have evolved as the Security Council reacted to new challenges. This evolution has given rise to authors in the field of conflict resolution to conceptually describe peacekeeping operations in terms of generations. Thus, the

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definition of peacekeeping and its associated tasks are fluid and continue to develop. The

development has progressed in the same direction since the inception of peacekeeping, moving

from unarmed observers in the 1950s to defensive military operations aimed at protecting

civilian populations from armed militias, terrorists and organized criminals. Peacekeeping

mandates have expanded to include facilitating elections; disarming, demobilizing and

reintegrating former combatants (DDR); and restoring the rule of law in weak states.[10]

The Evolution of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations

First Generation Peacekeeping – The United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF)

UNEF became the first test case of peacekeeping operations. The Security Council

created UNEF to enforce the withdrawal of French, British and Israeli armed forces, to serve as a

buffer between the two sides, and supervise the ceasefire.[11] The mission established the basic

principles of peacekeeping missions.[12] The first principle is that conflicting parties must both

agree to a peace or ceasefire and must agree to allow peacekeepers into their respective states to

monitor the agreement. This principle acknowledged the sovereignty of each state by requesting

permission to enter the conflict zone. Second, the peacekeepers may only use force in self-

defense. It is the responsibility of the parties to the conflict to refrain from further violence.

Typically, the parties have signed a peace agreement or ceasefire that states as much. Third,

peacekeepers are not parties to the conflict but neutral observers of peace agreements without

prejudice to either side. Fourth, peacekeepers restrict and restrain their actions to the mandate

given them by the Security Council. Lastly, UN Security Council resolutions sanction and

legitimize peacekeeping operations.[13]

UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld established the basic principles of

peacekeeping operations by the manner in which he implemented the UNEF mandate. UNEF

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became a pre-condition for the ceasefire and withdrawal of forces. With the ceasefire secured, UNEF had an enforceable peace. Hammarskjöld then requested permission for UNEF forces to deploy on either side of the Israeli-Egyptian border. The Egyptians agreed, but the Israelis refused to answer, taken by the UN as a negative. So, the peacekeeping force would only deploy on the Egyptian side of the border. Meanwhile, Hammarskjöld assembled the force from states outside the conflict ensuring impartiality of the peacekeepers.

UNEF lasted for ten years as a successful model of UN peacekeeping missions monitoring ceasefire agreements. The Israelis had completely withdrawn from Egypt by March 1957. There were no further attacks during this time by either belligerent. UNEF accomplished its mission by inserting UN forces between the parties and creating several observation posts for surveillance of the demarcation line. In 1967, as war broke out between Israel and the Arab world, the Egyptians requested UNEF to withdraw. Though the Secretary-General tried to convince the Egyptians to reconsider, he ordered UNEF's withdrawal in June 1967.[14]

Second Generation Peacekeeping – The Changing Context and The United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR)

In his 1992 *Agenda for Peace*, UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali recognized two contextual shifts that would alter peacekeeping operations. First, the end of the Cold War offered new opportunities for Security Council cooperation and decisive action against threats to international peace.[15] Prior to this time, statesmen from both sides viewed conflict through a realist lens within a bipolar power structure. Each side's ability to veto UN Security Council Resolutions crippled the council's ability to act on humanitarian crises. Second, intrastate conflict was on the rise. Fierce nationalism threatened the cohesion of states with ethnic, religious, and cultural conflict.[16] Therefore, peacekeeping operations would have to respond to

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non-state actors, at times defending civilians from their own government. Within this new context, the Agenda for Peace defined peacekeeping as:

> *"the deployment of a United Nations presence in the field, hitherto with the consent of all the parties concerned, normally involving United Nations military and/or police personnel and frequently civilians as well."*[17]

The Rwandese Patriot Front (RFP) was a Tutsi militia intent on overthrowing the ethnically Hutu Rwandan government. The RPF used northern Rwanda and southern Uganda as its base of operations. Fighting was ongoing between the RFP and the government from 1990 to 1993 with a few brokered ceasefires. In August 1993, the parties signed the Arusha (Tanzania) Peace Agreement and invited the UN to ensure each side's compliance with the agreement. The Rwandan President died in a plane crash on 6 April 1994, igniting widespread violence throughout the country. Hutu militias killed the Prime Minister, several cabinet ministers and numerous other government officials. During that time, Hutu militias began systematically killing Tutsis throughout Rwanda prompting the RFP to resume fighting southward to protect Tutsis. The violence lasted until July 1994 when the RFP took control of the national government in Kigali. The UN estimated of Rwanda's nearly 8 million citizens in 1994, over 500 thousand died in the fighting, 2 million fled the country, and 2 million were internally displaced within Rwanda.[18]

UNAMIR's mission changed from 1993 to 1996 because the belligerents did not respect the Arusha Peace Agreement. The United Nations created UNAMIR in October 1993 to enforce the August 1993 Arusha Peace Agreement between the government of Rwanda and the Rwandese Patriotic Front. Its 1993 mandate called for the mission to monitor and report on several demilitarized zones, the weapons-secure area in and around Kigali, and the repatriation

of refugees; to train Rwandans to clear mines from their country; and to facilitate humanitarian assistance.[19] The UN authorized 2,700 peacekeepers, which were mostly unarmed because the mission required only monitoring and facilitation. During the genocide, the Security Council reduced UNAMIR's manning to just over 500 peacekeepers. They also altered the mandate, placing UNAMIR as an intermediary to the two parties in an attempt to negotiate a cease fire.[20] UNAMIR's monitoring and reporting mission changed from demilitarized zones to generally monitoring and reporting on the violence.[21] Once the violence subsided, the UN changed the mandate again to add training the national police force.[22] The UN changed the mandate once more in 1995 to include resettling refugees and providing security for the International Tribunal of Rwanda.[23] The Government of Rwanda asked UNAMIR to leave in 1996.

The Brahimi Report Shapes Third Generation Peacekeeping

Third generation peacekeeping evolved from the challenges peacekeepers faced while protecting civilians and maintaining its impartiality. In 2000, the Brahimi Report identified shortcomings to peacekeeping operations and recommended solutions to these issues. The most glaring concern was that unlike the early peacekeepers of UNEF, recently peacekeepers

> *"tended to deploy where conflict had not resulted in victory for any side, where a military stalemate or international pressure or both had brought fighting to a halt but at least some of the parties to the conflict were not seriously committed to ending the confrontation. United Nations operations thus did not **deploy into** post-conflict situations but tried **to create** them."[24]*

The report recognized the need for peacebuilding within the UN mission. Peacekeepers were responsible for maintaining a safe and secure environment for the civilian population. Peacebuilders first worked for a cessation to organized violence and second to make that

environment self-sustaining by creating legitimate and lasting government institutions to provide basic essential services, the rule of law, and a stable economy.[25] Peacekeeping and peacebuilding became linked due to the inseparable nature of their work. After all, peacekeeping operations could not end until peacebuilding operations had successfully worked with the government to create self-sustaining institutions capable of preserving peace. The UN recognized peacekeeping operations within intrastate conflicts had become nation-building (or rather state-building) and began calling these new sets of missions "peace operations".

Peace operations challenged the original principles of peacekeeping operations set in the 1950s. As already mentioned, peace operations deploy before the cessation of violence by the parties to the conflict. Consequently, third generation peacekeepers have a significantly higher force protection burden. Additionally, peace operations require more troops to protect population centers throughout the country. Debate is ongoing on the principles of self-defense and impartiality within intrastate conflict. The Brahimi report recognizes this tension, arguing impartiality and self-defense are still bedrocks of peace operations. However, the report also concludes, "no failure did more to damage the standing and credibility of United Nations peacekeeping in the 1990s than its reluctance to distinguish victim from aggressor."[26] Operationally, this requires UN peacekeepers to identify threats to themselves and the civilian population. Moreover, it requires them to seize the initiative to counter those threats, with force if required. Practically speaking, peace operations must delineate between an active defensive strategy and taking the offensive against an aggressor. The recognition that peace operations must identify and prepare for threats forced the Brahimi report to restate impartiality in terms of strictly obeying the mandate and creating robust rules of engagement.[27] This new form of operations, impartial only to the mandate, altered the way the Security Council authorized the

missions. Peace operations no longer used Chapter VI language from the UN Charter, giving the

Security Council authority to recommend solutions to the crisis.[28] Instead, peace operations

relied fully on Chapter VII, authorizing the use of force to restore peace.[29]

Human Security as a Framework for Peace Operations

Human security is a multifaceted concept which seeks to address cross-cutting threats to

survival, livelihood and human dignity.[30] Human security includes creating conditions which

free the population from fear and want.[31] These are lofty goals, indeed. In multidimensional

conflicts involving state actors, armed militias, terrorists, and organized crime, it allows peace

operations to create holistic solutions aimed at the root causes of violence. Moreover, it directs

efforts from the bottom-up perspective of bettering the lives of the population rather than top-

down perspective of power between groups. Such holistic approaches also have a better chance

of ensuring a lasting peace because they address the causal grievances underlying the violence.

The primary actor responsible for human security is the government. Peace operations

therefore become mechanisms to develop state institutions. Such a task is not easy. Peace

operations have limited resources. What's more is the government often lacks the will to

develop institutions because it clashes with deep seated corruption and impunity by its own

officials. Additionally, peace operations must be cautious not to build government institutions

beyond the government's capacity to sustain them. Lastly, such a vast set of objectives has the

potential to lose its focus if not directed by some method.

In fact as human security grew as a concept, the method by which peace operations could

leverage human security to produce a lasting peace required more study and improvement.

Peace operations needed a framework to link seemingly disparate yet concurrent efforts such as

digging wells, providing vaccines, securing marketplaces, and creating efficient courts back to a

stable peace. Perhaps there was no greater catalyst for doing so than NATO's war in Afghanistan and the coalition's war in Iraq. In terms of a U.S. intervention, there lacked a doctrinal foundation to engage the whole of government. In 2009, the United States Institute of Peace in coordination with the U.S. Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute published *Guiding Principles for Stabilization and Reconstruction*. The framework proposed five mutually supporting end-states: Safe and Secure Environment, Sustainable Economy, Stable Governance, Social Well-Being, and the Rule of Law. Across these end-states are several guiding principles; first among them is host nation ownership and capacity.[32] United Nations peacekeepers apply this same framework to peace operations in intrastate conflicts.

A safe and secure environment allows civilians to live without fear of systematic violence.[33] The first condition is the cessation of large-scale violence where warring parties have agreed to a ceasefire.[34] Peacekeepers support the conditions of a ceasefire or peace agreement by keeping the factions separate and establishing distinct areas of control between them. In intrastate conflicts, there are likely more than two factions. Mixed in with separatists groups and government proxy militias, terrorists and illicit traffickers can become spoilers. Even more daunting for peacekeepers is that any individual can take on more than one identity with connections to several factions, making motivations difficult to decipher.

The second condition is that a legitimate state must establish its monopoly over the means of violence. Peacekeepers in intrastate conflicts assist by advising on security sector reform (SSR) and the disarmament and demobilization of non-government factions.[35] Peacekeepers link these two efforts because armed groups are reluctant to voluntarily disarm when the fear the army and police will seek reprisals. Peacekeepers council and train government forces on the rule of law and community relationships. As they are helping to

reform state security institutions, peacekeepers will enforce the details of the peace agreement on disarmament and demobilization. Peacekeepers can collect and destroy weapons, dismantle illegitimate militias, all the while providing security guarantees for the affected groups. Peacekeeping units can also partner with all parties to the conflict in an effort to reintegrate segments back into society.

The third condition is physical security, where the population does not fear the outbreak of violence and the government can protect civil infrastructure. This condition allows refugees to return home without fear of retribution.[36] Peacekeepers protect vulnerable populations regardless of which faction the population supports. This idea goes to the core of peace operations' principle of impartiality and underscores the belief that people can only achieve peace through security. Peacekeepers also protect, and at times escort, non-governmental organizations (NGO) providing humanitarian assistance. Without security, NGOs cannot transport and distribute humanitarian aid such as food, water and medical care. Consequently, the lack of these basic human services undermines the physical security of the population. Infrastructure is also essential to distributing basic human services. Peacekeepers defend roads, ports, markets, wells, and power distribution systems. Recently the improvised explosive device (IED) has become particularly deadly for local populations, peacekeepers and NGOs. Peacekeepers educate the police and population alike to identify and react to IEDs. They also train the military and law enforcement officials how to disarm and dispose of these weapons.

The fourth condition is territorial security where the government controls its borders and there is free and open movement throughout the country.[37] Porous borders invite new factions such as organized crime into an already unstable condition. Additionally, unprotected borders allow weapons within a conflict to grow in number and lethality. Peacekeepers secure border

crossings, air and sea ports and train border guards to perform this mission. To support freedom of movement, peacekeepers work with the military and law enforcement to control roads and waterways. Additionally, they must restrict the flow of illicit commodities such as drugs, weapons, and people.

The fifth condition is public order where the government enforces laws equitably to protect life, liberty and property. Additionally, the government prevents and prosecutes criminal and politically-motivated violence.[38] Peacekeepers support public order by providing the conditions for security outlined above, training the host nation to provide these conditions on its own, and assisting the government to grow legitimate judicial institutions.

While establishing a safe and secure environment, peacekeepers face four trade-offs that add to the complexity of their work. First, they balance the use of force with the legitimacy of the U.N. mission. Peacekeepers often lean toward restraint over the use of force against isolated threats. The overbearing use of force by peacekeepers may undermine their perceived impartiality by the population and jeopardize the entire mission. Peacekeepers reason this scenario would allow for the return of large-scale systematic violence. Second, peacekeepers weight the legitimacy they may gain by using host national forces to provide security against the effectiveness of those forces. Peacekeepers maintain this balance by effectively training military and police forces and working together in joint patrols until the host nation forces are ready. Third, peacekeepers balance providing security with the military versus the police. While the military may be better armed and more capable, police forces often come from the local population. Again, peacekeepers must balance force with legitimacy. Fourth, peacekeepers maintain a balance between short term security imperatives and long term security sector reform. Initially, host nation forces may be heavy-handed. Additionally, there may be no legal systems

to prosecute criminals. Over time, peacekeepers help the government convince the population that the government is capable of providing public order while still protecting the rights of innocent civilians.

Third Generation Peacekeeping in Mali – Successes and Challenges in Providing a Safe and Secure Environment

<u>The Factions</u>

Mali's political and security situation is challenging, but the Algerian Peace Accord offers some hope. Mali faces another civil war with Tuareg and Arab separatist groups while at the same time under attack from several regional terrorist groups. The perception by some in the military that the Government of Mali was not being forceful enough against these groups resulted in a military coup d'état in 2012. The Government of Mali lacks sufficient control over its northern regions of Kidal, Timbuktu and Gao, allowing illicit trafficking across porous borders.[39] Cross-border trafficking provides weapons and money to the conflict. Moreover, the West African states including Mali suffer from poor governance and instability which has allowed trained Tuareg fighters from the 2011 Libyan civil war into the conflict.

Returning Tuareg armed fighters from the 2011 civil war in Libya formed The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA). The Tuareg are a nomadic people and the term Azawad refers in the limited sense to the three northern Malian provinces where Tuaregs reside, Kidal, Timbuktu and Goa. In the broader sense, Azawad refers to the vast lands across Libya, Niger, Algeria, Mali and Mauritania where nomadic Tuaregs have traditionally traveled. The MNLA seeks independence, or at least autonomy, from the Bamako government. The High Council for Azawad Unity (HCUA) is another Tuareg group which also calls for a break from the Bamako government. Taken together, these groups call themselves the Coordination;

however the recent peace negotiations in Algiers demonstrates there are differences between the groups.

Three terrorist groups – Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Ansar al Dine (Defenders of the Faith), and the Movement for Unity and Unity in West Africa (MUJOA) – exploit the weakness in Malian state capacity combined with the Tuareg civil war to fight for an Islamic state in Mali.[40] AQIM operates in the region of Timbuktu. Ansar al Dine also operates in Timbuktu as well as in the region of Kidal. MUJAO operates along the Niger River from Douentza in the Mopti region to Menaka in the Gao region.[41] While individuals may support both Coordination and terrorist groups, there are two fundamental differences between the groups. The terrorist groups fight for an Islamic state within West Africa governed by Sharia law. The Coordination groups are ethnic separatists and do not have this Islamic extremist view.[42] Terrorist groups also use terrorist tactics such bombings, shootings and kidnapping against civilians, while Coordination groups have not shown a desire to target civilians.

Organized crime offers another lens to view the conflict. Narcotics traffickers from Latin America use aircraft and ships to deliver cocaine to West Africa en route to Europe. Vast unguarded borders and large swaths of desert combined with a central geographic position in West Africa make Mali an idea transit point for drugs before they move on to Algeria, Libya and Tunisia. The Tuareg are separated into numerous clans and controlling territory means sharing in the profits of illicit economies. Trafficking therefore increases the frequency of intercommunal violence among clans.

The Malian government uses intercommunal rivalries to create and support proxy groups against Tuareg separatists. However, their true motivations may very well be the protection and preference the Malian government offers them against rival clans. In fact, seeking to defeat a

2006 rebellion by Idnan and Ifoghas Tuareg, President Amadou Toumani Toure supported their

rivals, the Tilemsi Arabs and Imghad Tuaregs. In exchange for their loyalty, President Toure

turned a blind eye to these groups' trafficking networks. The Imghad Tuaregs became the Group

for the Self-Defense of Imghad Tuaregs and Allies (GATIA), the main group in a collection of

pro-Bamako groups known as the Platform. The Tilemsi Arabs created the terrorist group

MUJAO and talks of its direct links to the government of Mali are a sensitive subject.[43] Rather,

it is more accurate to state that MUJAO has made partnerships with some government officials

to facilitate its trafficking business.[44] Regardless of how widespread links between the

Government of Mali, GATIA and MUJAO are, these groups have interests in keeping these

relationships to facilitate business and are therefore against efforts by the Coordination which

jeopardize them.

Proximate Causes and Recent Events

In January 2012, the MNLA reinforced with AQIM members attacked and defeated the

Malian army at Aguelhok in the Kidal region. The Malian army showed little capacity to fight

and fled the battle. Believing the Malian government was not committed to defeating the

rebellion, Captain Amadou Sanogo of the Malian army led a coup d'état ousting the

democratically elected government in March 2012. By the end of March, MNLA and Ansar al

Dine had culminated their offensive to take the northern provinces and declared an independent

state of Azawad days later. Captain Sanogo agreed to step down in favor of an interim

government in April.

In June, the terrorist group MUJAO turned on and defeated the separatist group MNLA

in Gao, sending MNLA forces fleeing north to their stronghold in Kidal. As MUJAO advanced

south toward Bamako in September, the Malian government requested international assistance.

The African-led International Support Mission in Mali (AFISMA) responded in December. In

January 2013, the French launched Operation Serval to defeat the terrorists in Mali. The

offensive successfully pushed the armed groups back to Kidal.[45]

In April 2013, UNSCR 2100 established MINUSMA under Chapter VII of the U.N.

Charter as a peacekeeping force. The resolution subsumed AFISMA within MINUSMA.[46] In

June 2013, the Coordination and the Malian government signed a ceasefire agreement in

Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, which allowed the Malian military back in Kidal and paved the

way for national elections.[47] Clearly, this agreement did not include terrorist armed groups

MUJAO, Ansar al Dine or AQIM. Mediated by the Algerians, the Malian government, the

Coordination and the Platform negotiated a more sustainable peace treaty in March 2015;

however, the Coordination has requested further negotiations before it will sign.

As of April 2015, Mali faces three security threats: terrorism, trafficking, and banditry.[48]

Terrorist organizations have again partnered with Coordination groups, including the MNLA to

attack Malian and MINUSMA forces. There have already been 57 attacks in 2015, more than

double the number for all of 2014. The French continue the counter-terrorism mission in West

Africa under Operation Barkane.

The Mandate

UNSCR 2164 agreed to in June 2014 describes MINUSMA's Chapter VII peacekeeping

mandate to provide a safe and secure environment by monitoring and enforcing the cessation of

large scale violence, assisting the return to Malian state monopoly on the use of force, promoting

physical security, and public order. To enforce and monitor the cessation of large scale violence,

MINUSMA will "exercise good offices, confidence-building, and facilitation at the national and

local levels…to anticipate, prevent, mitigate, and resolve conflict."[49] Also, the mission will

"stabilize key population centers…to deter threats and take active steps to prevent the return of armed elements."[50] MINUSMA will assist the Malian government to reestablish its monopoly on the use of force by supporting SSR and DDR efforts. Specifically, the mission will provide capacity-building and technical assistance to the police, gendarmerie and courts.[51] MINUSMA will also assist the Malian government to dismantle and reintegrate militias and self-defense groups.[52] MINUSMA's mandate to provide physical security is to "protect…civilians under imminent threat of physical violence [and] provide specific protection for women and children."[53] Additionally, the mission is responsible for the removal and destruction of mines and IEDs and to protect NGOs delivering humanitarian assistance.[54] MINUSMA's mandate says very little about territorial security other than urging surrounding states to prevent terrorists from crossing into Mali.[55]

Organization

United Nations forces are deployed north of the town of Mopti to secure population centers in Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu and to control two avenues of approach between Bamako and the northern regions (see map below). MINUSMA military units are organized as a division with three brigades, each covering a sector. Sector East is responsible for the Gao Region and has assigned four infantry companies from Bangladesh and Niger, along with two rotary wing aviation platoons (Dutch), a platoon of Special Operations Forces (Dutch) and a Dutch intelligence platoon. The Nigerien infantry are based in Ansongo and Menaka, to screen the major routes between Mali and Niger. The headquarters and the rest of the forces are in the town of Gao.

Sector North is responsible for the Kidal Region. Sector North has three companies of infantry soldiers mostly from Chad, a platoon of Special Operations Forces (Chadian), and an

explosive ordinance disposal platoon (Nepalese). One company of Chadian infantry is in Tessalit, along a main route to Algeria. The Chadian SOF is nearby in Aguelhok. The remainder of Sector North's forces is in the town of Kidal.

Sector West is responsible for the rest of the country, though it only has forces in the regions of Timbuktu, Mopti and Segou. Sector West has a company of Burkinabe infantry and a Swedish intelligence platoon in the town of Timbuktu, nearly two companies of Togolese infantry in Douentza (Mopti). It has a platoon of Togolese infantry reinforced with a squad of Liberian infantry in Dyabali (Segou). Sector West also has a platoon of Togolese infantry in Gossi (Mopti), guarding the road to Gao.
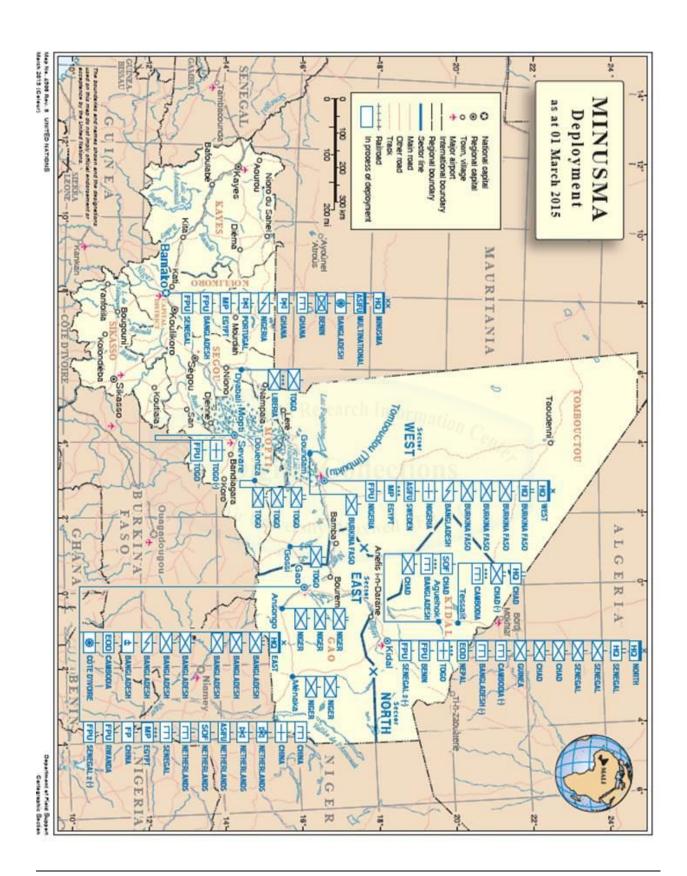
MINUSMA also has supporting UN agencies which facilitate and expound on the efforts by the military forces. For example, the United Nations Mine Action Service (UMAS) assists in mitigating threats of improvised explosive devices, unexploded ordinances such as shells and rockets, and mines. Due to the IED threat to the peacekeeping mission, UNMAS deeply focused on the force protection function "to enable MINUSMA and the UN partners to work safely in an explosive environment."[56] UNMAS is now responsible to train MINUSMA forces on IED awareness and response. To date, they have offered some pre-deployment training to troop contributing countries (TCCs). Additionally they have trained eight explosive ordinance disposal (EOD) teams and two route clearance platoons. UNMAS mentors MINUSMA units in the northern regions with twelve counter-IED experts.

UNMAS also attempts to defeat IEDs as a successful tactic. The group employs weapons intelligence teams (WIT) to exploit IED blast sites for intelligence to defeat the devices and attack the network. MINUSMA is not permitted by the mandate to kinetically target the individuals responsible for emplacing the IEDs, and passing this information to the French is a

delicate situation. When MINUSMA captures those who emplace IEDs, they must turn them over to the Malian authorities.

Policing efforts in Mali suffer from a lack of legal institutions in the country. The United Nations Police (UNPOL) has seven police force units consisting of deployed European police forces. UNPOL fights drugs, crime and terrorism using joint patrols with Malian police forces. However, the Malian courts do not prosecute criminals. One reason is the appointed judges are afraid and often abandon their post. The Government Malia is incapable, and in some cases, unwilling to create and support legal institutions. Moreover, the Government of Mali is reluctant to work with UNPOL and refuses to share information on crime with the UN.

<u>Tactical Implementation</u>

The MINUSMA Protection of Civilians Action Plan guides the tactical efforts by the mission to protect civilians.[57] One way MINUSMA protects civilians is through "deterrent presence" such as patrolling and creating temporary bases. In January 2015, MINUSMA sent a Bangladeshi platoon to Tabankort (Gao Region) because Coordination fighters were threatening to attack GATIA fighters in positions within the town. Days later when the Coordination attacked, 22 civilians from the town sought protection within the MINSUMA camp. In addition to harboring noncombatants, MINSUMA medevaced 13 wounded civilians and provided medical care for 31 GATIA fighters. As the fighting continued, Coordination fighters began to shoot rockets at the MINUSMA camp, endangering peacekeepers and civilians alike. Dutch helicopters serving in MINUSMA returned fire against the Coordination's rocket launcher, killing several fighters.[58] While the Coordination groups use the Tabankort incident to question MINUSMA's impartiality, MINUSMA's presence in Tabankort defended the civilian population from being trapped on a battlefield.

MINUSMA also protects civilians by facilitating the resolution of intercommunal conflict, which could lead to violence. In the Timbuktu region, peacekeepers maintain dialogues with nine armed groups as well as the Malian army to prevent the escalation of violence.[59] MINUSMA is clear about its intention to resolve conflict there and urges groups to settle disagreements before they become emotionally charged events. Peacekeepers in the Mopti region similarly assist with conflict resolution between the Dogons and Peuls and Tauregs and Peuls over land.[60] In the Gao region, peacekeepers lead observation and verification patrols with representatives from armed groups and the Malian army which investigate human rights violations.[61] Having representatives from all sides demonstrates MINUSMA treats violations of

human rights seriously without prejudice to which party perpetrated the act. Additionally, these patrols and the resulting reports provide an official truth and narrative of human rights violations that dissuades each side from inflating numbers and exacerbating conflict. In each of these interfaces, MINUSMA uses its relationship to remind all parties of their commitment to the ceasefire they signed as part of the Ouagadougou Accords as well as each group's responsibility to protect civilians.[62]

Peacekeeping missions are not intended to be long-term. To create a lasting secure environment, MINUSMA is building capacity within the Malian state to protect civilians. Such institution-building is usually rolled up into a broader security sector reform, but waiting for a top-down solution has its limitations. MINUSMA is working at the regional level to build capable civil administration. In the Timbuktu region, peacekeepers conduct training workshops with the police and military forces that teach tactics, techniques and procedures to protect the population.[63] In the regions of Gao and Mopti, peacekeepers conduct joint training patrols with national police, gendarmerie and the national guard.[64] These efforts are at an early stage and therefore MINUSMA's implementation is sporadic and uneven, but it is a start.

Challenges

MINUSMA faces three challenges to its peacekeeping mission. First, the on-going counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism environment in the Gao and Kidal regions adds a new complexity to peace operations. MINUSMA lacks both a peace to keep and a permissive environment in which to operate. Terrorists continue to target peacekeepers and aid workers forcing the mission to prioritize force protection over other activities. According to the Head of MINUSMA's Regional Bureau in Gao, the region is "not a permissive environment for peacekeeping as we know it" and the situation continues to degrade.[65] His counterpart in Kidal

echoed this statement and recalled the 17 January attacks on the MINUSMA camp at Kidal involved two vehicle-borne IEDs.[66] From September to December 2014, extremists killed sixteen and injured fourteen peacekeepers in several roadside IED incidents in the regions of Kidal and Gao.[67] From December 2014 to March 2105 there were an additional ten IED attacks in the same regions against MINUSMA peacekeepers which killed one and injured twenty-eight peacekeepers.[68] One diplomat describes the Sahel region as "an inexhaustible breading ground" for jihadists.[69] Deputy Assistant Secretary Victoria Holt stated, "no other mission faces asymmetric challenges at the level this one does."[70]

Second, several troop contributing countries supply MINUSMA forces, making the capabilities of these forces to perform peacekeeping functions uneven. Operational capacity in peace operations means peacekeepers have the ability to successfully plan and tactically execute missions designed to protect civilians and create a safe and secure environment. To do so, peacekeepers must be organized, trained and equipped to establish positions and observation posts, operate checkpoints and roadblocks, and patrol. Additionally, peacekeepers should know how to conduct investigations, liaise with armed groups and use force when necessary. Lastly, peacekeepers should be capable of protecting and sustaining themselves. These are the basic operating techniques from the United Nations' Peacekeeping Training Manual.

While the manual identifies basic skill sets required of peacekeepers, it does not provide extensive training for these skills. Instead, troop capabilities are a product of the training and experience provided by the troop contributing country (TCC). For example, Bangladesh has its own peace operations training center, where it can train officers going to these operations.[71] Perhaps more importantly, Bangladesh is a frequent contributor to peacekeeping operations. It has contributed military and police forces to operations in Mali, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Central

African Republic, Congo and more. Years of experience has undoubtedly made Bangladeshi

soldiers very capable of carrying out peacekeeping missions. Yet, many TCCs lack this training

and experience, making the United Nations' integrated forces difficult to command and control.

As previously mentioned, this peace operation is different than previous missions because

of the insurgent and terrorist threat to peacekeepers. Not only are forces unevenly trained, but

none of them, save a few European contingents in intelligence units, know how to fight a

counter-insurgency or counter-terrorism campaign. If MINUSMA is going to fill this role, it

requires commanders and forces from TCCs willing to fight the terrorists without being

paralyzed by fear.[72] In addition, they require commanders and forces that know how to operate

in this environment. Faced with mounting force protection concerns, the MINUSMA troops live

in regional camps and patrol only during the day. As the MINUSMA Forces Deputy Chief of

Staff put it, "We build a castle and ride out during the day like knights. Then we ride back in our

castle before dark and close the door."[73] This posture is completely opposite to American

counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism doctrine. Field Manual 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*,

states, "Effective operations are shaped by timely, specific, and reliable intelligence, gathered

and analyzed at the lowest possible level and disseminated throughout the force."[74]

NATO forces in Afghanistan and American forces in Iraq combatted terrorism and

sectarian violence by living in the neighborhoods they patrolled. Doing so enabled those forces

to collect intelligence on enemy forces and reassure the population. In MINSUMA, according to

one intelligence officer, troops rarely submit detailed and timely reports that help paint a picture

of the battlespace. Locking themselves in camps has another detrimental effect besides the

blinding lack of intelligence. "Bunkerization" leads to the reliance of third-parties, like the

French, for protection and in doing so, the peacekeepers lose their impartiality.[75]

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Third, Malian geography forces MINUSMA and humanitarian non-government organizations to operate with extended supply and communications lines, threatened by terrorists and bandits alike. The MINUSMA forces in the Kidal region operate in a remote, insecure, and arid region 1500 kilometers from the MINUSMA headquarters.[76] It is another 400 kilometers to MINUSMA's furthest camp in the town of Tessalit. MINUSMA does not have access to the Kidal Airport, which requires all of their supplies to be convoyed overland.[77] Adding to the difficulties, the temperature in Kidal regularly exceeds 100 degree Fahrenheit and there is not enough water even for the local population.[78] MINUSMA must send every necessity from water and food to fuel and ammunition on a 1500-2000 kilometer convoy over unpaved and insecure roads.

MINUSMA uses contracted carriers to make the supply runs, but it does not defend them well. In addition to the IED threat, terrorists and bandits alike have intercepted several MINUSMA convoys. In October 2014, MUJAO ambushed a logistics convoy killing five peacekeepers in the Gao region.[79] On 17 April 2015, terrorists attacked a MINUSMA supply convoy fifteen kilometers outside of Gao, killing two contractors and injuring one.[80] The terrorists then set the truck on fire. On 20 April 2015, terrorists again attacked a MINUSMA supply convoy, killing the driver and burning the truck.[81] The situation has gotten so bad that drivers in Gao and Ansango went on strike from 21-23 April 2015 in protest. With convoys becoming increasingly dangerous and no other way to resupply Kidal, some MINUSMA officials have considered closing down operations in the region.[82]

Recommendations

MINSUMA's mission, which implies a counter-insurgency role while operating in a counter-terrorism environment, is an overreach of its capacity. Furthermore, properly executing

a counter-insurgency strategy requires offensive operations which undermine the United Nations' impartiality. MINUSMA soldiers are not trained and equipped for the counter-insurgency mission and the troops lack the appetite to fight in this manner. More importantly, the United Nations must remain an impartial international organization especially during peace operations because the organization also is charged with upholding international law, delivering humanitarian aid and protecting human rights. Donald provides a good definition of impartiality. "An impartial entity is active, its actions independent of the parties to a conflict, based on a judgment of the situation; it is fair and just in its treatment of the parties while not taking sides."[83] In many cases including Mali the United Nations helps broker the peace agreement between the parties. By attempting to implement a counter-insurgency strategy, MINUSMA has become a party to the conflict leaving a void in honest brokers. Rather than transporting and guarding humanitarian aid and protecting civilians, MINUSMA has become the target.

MINUSMA should refocus its mission to the protection of civilians by providing physical security for populations and ensuring public order. MINUSMA had a perfect opportunity to demonstrate their ability to impartially protect civilians on 27 April 2015 in the town of Menaka. Members of GATIA (and perhaps the Malian army) attacked the MNLA-held town of Menaka, taking twelve prisoners.[84] MINUSMA has two platoons of Nigerien infantry based in Menaka which was unable or unwilling to intercept the attacking force. Why MINUSMA took no action is still under review by its headquarters but the perception by the MNLA must be that MINUSMA purposefully allowed the attack. Considering MINUSMA's actions in Tabankort when the situation was reversed in January 2015, the perception is not unreasonable, though it may not be correct. Incidents such as the one in Menaka threaten an already unstable peace deal ironed out in Algeria in March 2015 and set to be signed on 15 May. Should the MNLA

counter-attack, the situation could degrade further. MINUSMA should act to de-escalate the situation and broker a deal that at least leads to the release of the prisoners. This would also be a good opportunity for MINUSMA to expel both GATIA and MNLA fighters from Menaka.

In towns such as Menaka, where control has passed from one armed group to another, MINUSMA could ensure public order by providing interim law enforcement functions. In fact, MINUSMA's Protection of Civilian Strategy already lists inter- and intra-community violence as a threat to civilians.[85] Specifically, disputes over livelihood and land could lead to civilian deaths. Additionally, the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime lists Menaka as a key narcotics smuggling node, which brings with it additional threats to civilians.[86] Providing law enforcement during such a chaotic time would protect civilians and create a semblance of stability within towns like Menaka.

MINUSMA should also continue its involvement in facilitating access and delivery of basic needs and services such as food, water and shelter. In times of crisis people may use that crisis as an excuse to deny access to basic services based on group affiliation. MINUSMA should ensure wells do not become sources of conflict. Additionally, the mission can patrol the roads to ensure a safe environment for humanitarian assistance to flow into conflict areas. Here, UNMAS' mine-clearing operations can be portrayed in an impartial manner. MINUSMA can also work with non-government organizations to ensure water and food sources are safe and to prevent the spread of disease.[87]

Recommending MINUSMA shift focus to more impartial activities does not deny the terrorist threat in the region, nor the insurgency. The French Operation Barkane is a regional counter-terrorism mission. Perhaps the French could increase this operation, or other western states could contribute forces to the operation. Regardless, MINUSMA forces and Barkane

forces should not be co-located as they are in some areas in Mali. Doing so leads to the perception of MINUSMA supporting French interests in Mali, which are complex to say the least. MINUSMA then becomes an easy target for those opposed to the French, not just the terrorists.

It is the role of the Malian government to fight the insurgency. Counter-insurgency doctrine argues the center of gravity for such operations is the population. In short, the Government of Mali must instill a sense of its own legitimacy within the people in Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu. To do so, the government must be capable of providing security, governance, rule of law, a stable economy and social well-being of its citizens. MINUSMA's efforts to provide human security, stabilize Mali's economy and enhance social well-being of the Malian people does assist in stabilizing the country, but MINUSMA provides these services impartially. Rather than supporting the government as a hoped-for short-cut to the cessation of violence, MINUSMA should work with all parties to the conflict to protect civilians and urge all parties to consider a political resolution to the conflict.

Conclusion

Mali presents the United Nations with a unique environment. The active presence of insurgents and terrorists confounds and restricts the operations and tactics peacekeepers have grown accustomed to. Worse still, peacekeepers are not trained properly to operate in this environment. Combined with the expansive geography of Mali, MINUSMA forces are reliant on supply convoys, while at the same time unable to secure them. These challenges are qualitative, requiring better doctrine and tactics rather than more troops. If United Nations Peacekeeping operations continue in similar environments, the discussion surrounding the effectiveness of

peacekeeping operations needs to change. Focusing primarily on troop strength ignores the changing operational environment.

Moreover, the challenges MINUSMA faces should warn the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping that it has overstepped its bounds by granting a mandate that implies the UN mission will support the Government of Mali against an insurgency. Such a mandate jeopardizes the United Nations' claims at impartiality and its traditional defensive posture. Perhaps a very sharp political view on MINUSMA's mandate may be able to argue the language falls short of "support", but the operational and tactical decisions left to the MINUSMA forces belie that kind of precision. Indeed, at what point does an active defense of civilians begin to look like an offensive counter-insurgency operation? Recognizing the new operating environment, United Nations peacekeeping operations in the future should first continue to impartially place the protection of civilians first and foremost in the mission. Second, TCCs require the proper doctrine and training to work in this environment. Third, United Nations peace operations should resist becoming a party to the conflict with intervening forces. Future studies should focus on the required capabilities to protect civilians in these environments and zero in on which TCCs can be trained to provide those capabilities.

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